

When Your Student's Grandparents ARE Their Parents: Understanding Grandparent-headed Families

In Montana, more than 6,600 grandparents have the sole responsibility of raising their grandchildren. These families are formed due to a family crisis such as parental substance abuse, mental or physical health problems, death, incarceration, and teen pregnancy. In 2002, Montana State University Extension started the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project. The Project develops support groups, provides education and resources for grandfamilies, offers workshops and conferences on related issues, and publishes fact sheets and newsletters on the topic.

Because the grandparents are parenting “off time”, they often struggle to help their grandchildren at school. Many feel guilt and shame because their adult children are not parenting. Grandparents may be hesitant because parenting school-age children today is different than it was a generation ago. Reaching out to these families can greatly assist the children in their learning. This presentation will provide information on grandfamilies, the challenges they face, information on available resources, and suggestions for Title I educators who work with the children.